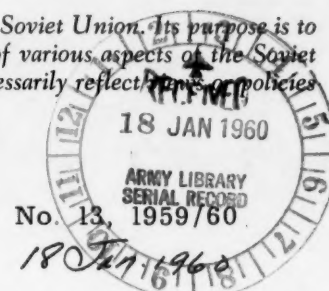


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SOVIET AFFAIRS ANALYSIS SERVICE

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Outline of Reference Paper On:

SOVIET PROPAGANDA -- EVOLUTION AND PERMANENCE**

In the years since Stalin's death Soviet propaganda has undoubtedly mellowed. The USSR's various communications media no longer present life in the Soviet Union exclusively in terms of political poster art. The joys and sorrows of everyday human life, even honest differences of opinion as to the best solutions for certain current Soviet problems, receive much more attention nowadays. Communist political indoctrination has been curtailed, especially over the radio and television--media which even in the USSR are more oriented to entertainment values than is the press.

But this "thaw" has not gone very deep and is merely an affair of appearances, not a change in underlying realities. Specifically, the picture given Soviet citizens of the outside world has changed little, although in describing the "capitalist U. S. A.", for example, some of the more lurid epithets of yore may be avoided for tactical reasons. But the gulf between the out-of-date, immoral and self-destructive capitalist world and the upright, cultured and progressive Communist world, with the Soviet Union in the vanguard, continues to be the leitmotif of Soviet propaganda.

**** Editor's Note:** This analysis may be found especially stimulating if it is read in conjunction with the two articles written recently on Soviet propaganda by Max Frankel, Moscow correspondent of the New York Times (New York Times, Jan. 11, 1960, p. 1, and New York Times, Jan. 12, 1960, p. 4).

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SOVIET PROPAGANDA -- EVOLUTION AND PERMANENCE

Today some students and observers of the Soviet scene believe that in recent years Soviet propaganda has undergone evolutionary changes. The volume of political agitation included in Soviet propaganda has diminished, they maintain. They also see present-day Soviet propaganda as characterized by at least the beginnings of a more objective and comprehensive presentation of information, as well as by a considerably less aggressive tone. Indeed, a superficial comparison of today's Soviet propaganda with that of the last years of the Stalin era may easily lead to the conclusion that it is really very different now from what it was then. A characteristic feature of Soviet propaganda in Stalin's time was its vulgar crudity and monotonous uniformity in all press and radio organs. Broadcast or published material dealing with internal policy and life in the Soviet Union was devoid of any trace of human feeling and consisted mainly of routine directives, instructions, and at times even warnings and threats. Propaganda dealing with foreign policy questions was marked by violent and totally unjustified attacks on Western policies in general and the United States in particular.

The observable changes in Soviet propaganda within the last two years may be summarized as follows:

1. The volume of purely political propaganda and agitation has considerably diminished.
2. There has been an increase in material dealing with science, culture and art.
3. A noticeable degree of human feeling has emerged in descriptions of the internal life of the USSR and more or less objective information has appeared in such descriptions.
4. Soviet propaganda outlets have even permitted the expression of differing opinions on certain problems of internal policy, as well as variations in descriptions of life in the Soviet Union and in the treatment of certain philosophical questions.

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Soviet Radio, TV, Cut Political Coverage

The reduced volume of purely political propaganda may be gauged from a look at current Soviet radio and television programming. While the volume of political propaganda broadcast by Soviet radio networks has diminished, the amount of such propaganda appearing on television has been reduced to negligible proportions. A rough breakdown of the material included in the transmissions of the Soviets' Central Television Network during the latter half of 1958 shows that 37 per cent of the total transmission time was devoted to feature films, 21 per cent to theatrical presentations, 20 per cent to sports events and only 10 per cent in all to news broadcasts, comment on foreign affairs and discussions of current home affairs.

In surveying the Soviet press one should start by making special mention of Komsomolskaya Pravda (Young Communist Pravda) which during the last few years has ceased to be a mere replica of Pravda itself and has acquired something of a character of its own. Frequently the authors of articles in Komsomolskaya Pravda, after beginning with a discussion of "Communist morality," will switch to purely human morality. Many of this paper's recent articles on truthfulness, courage, free will, genuine friendship, pure love, the treatment of girls and women, good taste, etc. would have been considered outspoken if found in the press of any country in the free world. Indeed, articles and statements often appear now in the Soviet press which could well stimulate attitudes hostile to Communism among their readers.

For ten years we have been assured that all careers are open to us. . . . How hard it is. What will become of us, what will become of us? I have found myself in a field, in the dark and rain, not a light to be seen, with a matriculation certificate pasted on my brow. Thus I go out into life. What am I to do, what am I to do? ("Continuation of a Legend," Noyabr (November), No. 7, 1954).

. . . Think about the following problem: A person leaving school, where he or she has studied for ten years, has to choose a career. In our country --where all paths are "open" to the young--this person suddenly chooses a career as a charwoman, or goes off to lug stones around on a construction job. Romantic indeed! . . . Shall I too, with my knowledge of Newton's Laws, I who have studied logarithmic functions and become familiar with nuclear reactions and the ideological riches of Soviet literature, get a job as a doorman and sweep the street? (Komsomolskaya Pravda, June 21, 1959).

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Press Reveals Class Distinctions

Although official propaganda denies the existence of class distinctions in the Soviet Union apart from a certain class distinction between workers and kolkhoz (collective farm) laborers, the Soviet press can no longer conceal the existence in the USSR of two classes--the "new" ruling class as opposed to the working class which is exploited by the state. In an article entitled "On the Pattern of Transition from Socialism to Communism" (Kommunist, No. 14, 1959), the author admits that "certain class distinctions do exist even in the Soviet Union."

Moreover, those publications which describe Soviet youth striving for spiritual liberation are far from being an asset to Soviet propaganda.

Some young men and girls, mainly students, make nihilistic statements belittling the achievements of the Soviet people and presenting our Soviet reality in a distorted light. (Excerpts from the Report of the First Secretary of the Komsomol at the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress, April, 1958).

Negativists... in the name of the "new" they are ready to write off the whole classical legacy of the past... for the sake of any foreign model they can spit upon all that we hold most near and dear (Komsomolskaya Pravda, April 24, 1957).

Contrasting views on a variety of questions appear increasingly in the Soviet press. For example press discussions of the draft for the reform of national education were characterized by the publication of opinions both for and against combining classroom instruction with manual labor. The same variety of opinion marked discussions on compulsory manual labor for young people from the age of 15 on. (Pravda, September 2, and December 2, 1953; Komsomolskaya Pravda, June 21, 1959; Literaturnaya Gazeta, June 26, 1958; Semya i Shkola, (School and Family) No. 4, 1958; Voprosy Filosofii, (Questions of Philosophy) No. 6, 1958).

Since 1955 rather a lively controversy has emerged between the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star) and the journal Voenny Vestnik (Military Messenger) concerning the correct evaluation of the experience of World War II and about certain other problems of a political nature. Even within Krasnaya Zvezda the authors of certain articles took opposite stands on these questions. In an exceedingly lively argument over the future of the sovkhozes (state farms) which has developed in recent months various Soviet publications have come out with widely differing views. In an article entitled "This Is What It Is All Leading To" (Nash Sovremennik, (Our Contemporary) No. 4, 1959,), G. Vinnichenko criticizes the sovkhoz system and proposes its amalgamation with the kolkhozes (collective farms) into a single cooperative-kolkhoz system. An article entitled "Losses, Losses... When Will There Be A Profit?" (Selskoe Khozyaistvo, (Agricultural Economy), October 13, 1959) sharply criticizes the sovkhoz system for its unprofitability. Yet at the very same time other Soviet press organs are publishing articles

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stressing the need to develop and consolidate the sovkhos system. Izvestia published a report by Alexei N. Kosygin, Chairman of the State Planning Commission which stated:

In recent years the sovkhoses have come to play a great part in the production and deliveries of agricultural produce. In 1960 the contribution of sovkhoses toward deliveries to the state will increase (Izvestia, October 28, 1959).

Varying views have also been published regarding the problem of the material interest of Soviet workers and kolkhoz laborers in the results of their labor and the sacrifice of their personal material interests for the common good. Thus, Ivan Ilichev, the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Section of the Central Committee of the CPSU, sharply condemned the journal Tekhnika Molodezhi (Young People's Technology) because it

... went so far as to claim that the decisive factor in the free development of man in the Communist future... would be the degree to which his stomach was filled. The journal wrote: "only where man is not constantly, daily and inextricably concerned with a piece of bread and the daily satisfaction of his hunger, can true freedom begin." (Kommunist, No. 14, 1959).

Propaganda's Nature and Aims Not Altered

Such frank discussions may give the impression that the Soviet press has changed since Stalin's death, particularly since his "dethronement" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. However, this does not answer the question as to whether there has been a change in the real underlying nature and aims of Soviet propaganda. And the answer to that question can only be "No."

In view of the measures adopted after Stalin's death by the top Soviet leadership relaxing the savage harshness of Soviet punitive practice, Soviet propaganda had to change its image at least. But it must be remembered that this change of image has no connection whatever with any increased benevolence on the part of the Soviet leaders. If Soviet propaganda has undergone a "face-lifting" since 1953, it is only because the Soviet government noted the ever-increasing antipathy to any political instruction or study of Marxist-Leninist theory on the part not only of ordinary Soviet citizens but of special categories such as economists, Party and Komsomol members, young students, etc., and concluded that such "specialists" are so important to the stability and future of the regime that some practical concessions to their frame of mind were essential.

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Among a certain section of the intelligentsia there is an incorrect attitude toward the social sciences. Some reason like this: The technical sciences are an important matter, but as for the social sciences, what is the use of them? They are merely argumentation, nothing tangible. ("Problems of Communist Education of the Workers," Kommunist, No. 4, 1959).

Important intellectual groups which formerly participated in the work of the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge had ceased to do so:

Many of the country's noted scholars, public and political figures, writers, composers and artists withdrew from the Society's work. Frequently individual Society program organizers, with a total lack of principle, offer the platform to any old hack-worker or casual speaker, thus compromising both the Society and the lecture method of spreading propaganda. (Partiinaya Zhizn, Party Life, No. 18, 1959).

Propaganda on Foreign Policy Unchanged

This change of image, however, has not extended to foreign policy. Explanations of the policies of different states of the free world and of problems of the world Communist movement remained virtually unchanged. Whereas under the pressure of growing internal criticism, Soviet propaganda has had to resort to all manner of artifices and tactical retreats regarding Soviet domestic policies, in the field of foreign policy and its plans in connection with the international Communist movement Soviet propaganda has remained as before and is notable for its absolute uniformity throughout all organs of the Soviet press.

Of course, at the present time the Soviet press occasionally carries articles containing favorable references to the American people and their government, yet such articles are almost invariably accompanied by others sharply attacking American policy and the American way of life. On the anniversary of the October Revolution, when, during the celebrations, instead of jet planes, a "dove of peace" was launched on Red Square in Moscow, Pravda (November 7, 1959), ran two articles full of the most vicious attacks on the United States and the free world in general. David Zaslavsky, a veteran Soviet journalist, in an article entitled "Life is Triumphant," described the situation in the United States as follows:

... "Humanists," actuated by a lofty Christian love of their neighbors, are endeavoring to starve to death half a million people--their neighbors and their neighbors' children.

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This is how the "humanists'" campaign goes: The factories stand idle, millions of people starve and two hundred "philanthropists" wait patiently on Wall Street until they return to work or die of starvation. (Ibid., November 7, 1959).

Speaking of Khrushchev's trip to America and his "successes" Zaslavsky added:

The one who risked drawing the "First Communist" into an open theoretical argument has only himself to blame. (Ibid., November 7, 1959).

An article by E. Bargi in the same issue of Pravda asserts:

The senility of capitalism is also manifested in the ideological field. Capitalist ideology boils down to one thing . . . profit. All the rest - religion, philosophy, slogans about "the freedom of the individual" and so forth - serve only to fool the masses . . . The capitalist structure, condemned by history to swift and final destruction, is now incapable of inspiring ideological enthusiasm. (Ibid., November 7, 1959).

Similar articles may be found in practically every issue of a wide range of Soviet publications. They do not differ in any essential from earlier anti-American and anti-Western propaganda. As regards the world Communist movement Soviet propaganda has also remained unchanged. Simultaneously with the proclamation of the principle of peaceful coexistence all Soviet magazines and newspapers have reaffirmed the speedy victory of world Communism.

The October Revolution opened a new era in world history-- that of the destruction of capitalism and its vestiges and the introduction of the principles of the Communist order (Molodoi Kommunist, Young Communist, No. 10, 1959).

The ideas of Communism are invincible. Communism offers a bright future to all mankind (Pravda, November 3, 1959).

. . . Mankind is irresistible, it advances through every obstacle to the victory of Socialism and Communism throughout the world. (Kommunist, No. 11, 1959).

Hostility to West's Ideology Intensified

In this respect Soviet propaganda has not undergone any evolution, nor has it taken a single step away from the direct path to its goal, but has actually been intensified and is now stressing the point that never before has the struggle against the ideology of the West been so bitter as it is today.

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The ideological struggle is being intensified. It may well be a long time since there was such a variety of methods used and so bitter a struggle as during the last few years (Kommunist, No. 14, 1959).

It should be noted that recently Soviet propaganda abroad, supported by an increase of contacts of all sorts between the Communist states and the free world, has intensified greatly. It takes the form of a constant ramming home of the theory that capitalism and the democratic structure are doomed to destruction, while Communism will triumph, and that Communism offers a bright future to the whole world while the West is spiritually bankrupt. Communism, it is always proclaiming, offers an advanced, progressive ideology and culture based on the principle of "eternal peace."

These claims are nothing less than a proclamation by the Central Committee of the CPSU of the continuation and intensification of the Cold War against the free world. Regardless of changes in detail, Soviet propaganda has not changed essentially on these questions, but now as before aims at supporting the expansion of Soviet power, as does the entire world Communist movement.

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